

# PEEHIP

## ***Expansion of the Step Therapy Program Effective February 1, 2006*** ***Maintenance Drug Changes Effective February 1, 2006***

In December 2005, the PEEHIP Board approved the expansion of the Step Therapy Program beginning February 1, 2006. The change impacts new prescriptions in the following drug classes, including Calcium Channel Blockers used for high blood pressure and other heart conditions., Antidepressants used for depression, certain drugs used to treat allergies, Topical Immunomodulators used to treat Psoriasis, HMG's and Zetia used to treat high cholesterol.

**What is Step Therapy?** Step Therapy is a program especially for people who take prescription drugs regularly to treat ongoing medical conditions such as arthritis/pain, heartburn, or high blood pressure. It is designed to:

- Provide safe and effective treatments for your good health
- Make prescriptions more affordable
- Enable PEEHIP to continue to provide affordable prescription coverage while controlling rising costs

Step Therapy is organized in a series of “steps” with *your doctor* approving your medication every step of the way. It is developed under the guidance and direction of independent, licensed doctors, pharmacists, and other medical experts. Together with Express Scripts Inc. (ESI), they review the most current research on thousands of drugs tested and approved by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) for safety and effectiveness.

The expansion of the PEEHIP Step Therapy program will apply to new prescriptions *for certain drug classifications* written on or after February 1, 2006. Prescription drugs that have not been purchased in over 130 days are considered new prescriptions for this program. **If you are currently taking a prescription for a second-line agent, you will not experience a change. If you are provided samples by your Physician the sample medications are not considered processed claims and still would be subject to step therapy.**

### **How does Step Therapy work?**

**First Step:** Generic drugs are usually in the first step. These drugs are commonly prescribed, less expensive treatments that are safe and effective in treating many medical conditions. Your copayment is usually the lowest with a first-step drug. It will be necessary for you to use the first-step drugs before the plan will pay for second-step drugs.

**Second Step:** If your treatment path requires more medications, then the program moves you along to this step, which generally includes brand-name drugs. Brand-name drugs are usually more expensive than generics, so most have a higher copayment.

When a prescription for a second-step drug is processed at your pharmacy for the first time, your pharmacist will receive a message indicating the PEEHIP plan uses Step Therapy. If you would rather not pay full price for your prescription drug, your doctor needs to give you a prescription for a first-step drug. Only your doctor can change your current prescription to a first-step drug covered by your program.

To receive a first-step drug:

**Ask your pharmacist to call your doctor** and request a new prescription

*OR*

**Contact your doctor** to get a new prescription

With Step Therapy, more expensive brand-name drugs are usually covered in a later step in the program if you have already tried the first-step drug. If your doctor decides you need a different drug for medical reasons before you have tried a first-step drug, then your doctor can call Express Scripts to request a “prior authorization.” If the second-step drug is approved, you will pay a higher copayment than for a first-step drug. If the drug is not approved, you will need to pay the full price for the drug. You can appeal the decision through the appeals process outlined in your member handbook.

Drug classes and examples of the medications that will be part of the expansion of the PEEHIP Step Therapy program effective February 1, 2006 include:

**I Calcium Channel Blockers such as:**

Norvasc, Covera-HS, Verelan PM, Cardene SR, Sular, and DynaCircCR

**II Antidepressant Medications such as:**

Paxil, Paxil CR, Pexeva, Zoloft, Lexapro, Luvox, Celexa, Prozac, Prozac Weekly , Effexor, Effexor XR, Cymbalta, Wellbutrin XL

**III HMG (Dosage Dependent) Cholesterol Reducing Drugs such as:**

Crestor, Vytorin, Lipitor, Pravachol, Zetia

**IV Allergy Medications such as:**

Singulair, Accolate, Zflo

**V Topical Immunomodulator drugs used to treat Psoriasis such as:**

Elidel, Protopic

**Maintenance Drug changes Effective February 1, 2006**

**Effective February 1, 2006, the first fill on new prescriptions for maintenance medications will be limited to a 34 day supply. After the first fill, members can receive a 90 day supply when the Physician writes the prescription for a 90 day supply.**

*If you have questions about the Step Therapy program, contact Express Scripts at 1-866-243-2125*